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Marvin Zimpher – Oral History 5-5-2002

Will you please tell me your name?

Mr. Zimpher: Marvin Zimpher.

Could you please spell it?

Mr. Zimpher: Zimpher.

No I know you your name is very familiar. Besides the street name, I remember Zimpher's Fruit Stand. Did you?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, I have a picture here of it.

Oh, I would like to see that later.

Mr. Zimpher: Ok.

That was my favorite place. I was so upset when they closed down.

Mr. Zimpher: A lot of people remember Zimpher's Fruit Stand.

Well sure, it was the best!
Laugher.
I think I lived off the Zimpher's Fruit Stand most of the summer and then winter too. Your family name, Zimpher on one side, how about the other side?

Mr. Zimpher: The other side was Lotts. Lotts.

And grandparents?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea my grandparents were retired. My grandfather was a retired Iowa farmer. Sold his farm and moved to Sebastopol in 1915. Bought a house on Coulter Avenue. Which I still own.

Really? Wow! Since 1915?

Mr. Zimpher: Since 1915.

The house was already built?

Mr. Zimpher: A huh. We bought it already built. My parents were high school sweethearts in Raleigh Iowa. My father followed my mother to California when her parents moved to California. And they were married at the house on Coulter in 1921. Moved back to Iowa, ran a 160 acre farm until 1931. My dad decided he wanted to visit California, he liked it, so he sold the stock and everything on the farm, bought a new Chevrolet and they moved to Sebastopol in 1931.

So, they came directly to Sebastopol, because of family connections?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea. Family, grandkids were here.

What business did he do?

Mr. Zimpher: Chicken business. On Colvert Lane. We moved to Covert Lane, I remember it was just a gravel road. We Route 1 Box 17 ½. That's Box 17 and 18, we moved in between em. That's Box 17 ½. George Covert lived on the corner. Covert lane, he had a little barn, a few horses. He had Dapples. Where the Fiesta Market is now.

So where were there apples all the way back? All the way to...

Mr. Zimpher: Oh yea. Most of the old apples were covered on that side. Dad went into the chicken business, six acres here. He bought about 9 more acres.

Right on Covert Lane?

Mr. Zimpher: Right on Covert Lane. He had, at least he had 5,000 laying hens. Which was a pretty good operation back in those days. Now it 's not really large. It wouldn't be very large. But then it was. He retired from the chicken business in 1955. Traveled around a little and in 1960 subdivided the 15 acres, put in Sebastopol's first major sub-division in 1960. I leased the fruit stand then and started building houses. My dad, we built, well I'm not sure of the numbers, but around a little over 100 houses in Sebastopol.

Wow, so you helped it all become the city that it is?

Mr. Zimpher: We subdivided 15 acres and then bought another 10 acres up the road and subdivided that and built houses there too.

Was Rangle Ranch then just all a ranch?

Mr. Zimpher: When I grew up George Rangle had cattle there. I remember growing up on Rangle Ranch, huttin jack rabbits.

So you were into construction business?

Mr. Zimpher: Yes. I started in 1960. Started on Colter Lane building houses. Brought up the subdivision there.

Did you go to high school?

Mr. Zimpher: Analy High. Graduated in 1943. Went to elementary school at what is it, Parkside? First year I was there, was in the old school which was up on the hill which they tore down and they built Parkside School later graduated in from the 8th grade and went into Analy High School and then went

Mr. Zimpher: into the Army Air Core in 1943. Learned to fly. Still in training when the war ended. I think ended the service.

You didn't quit the plane industry did you?

Mr. Zimpher: No, Sam Huck, my partner. Charles Huck, Sam's older son and I were good friends, all though school and when I got out of the service, I talked to Sam about flying and we went down to Comfort and we built a surplus airplane. They had em for sale right after the war. Then we went to together and bought a, it was a Canadian trainer – PT26 Fairchild. We gave them a check and flew it up to Sonoma County Airport.

That's was out on Sebastopol Road, that one or the one that's up by Windsor ?

Mr. Zimpher: The one that's by Windsor. Sonoma County Airport. They took over from the Army Air Core. Just long too before that there wasn't much out there, then. There was a hangar and a repair shop and a little tower and things like that. I think I would have traded that for that plane that was up in the tree. That landed in the tree, so I lost half interest in that plane.

Opps! Laughter.
Do you have any special memories from either grammar school or high school that you want to share?

Mr. Zimpher: I, was on the track team at Analy. Used to high jump. One year I had the class senior high jump record for a year or so.

Did you compete with the other schools in the area?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea. I got to medal out of San Jose and North Bay League.

Ranging pretty far!

Mr. Zimpher: Yes. I remember I road with the coach and track team and I drove my dad's Buick down to the track meet in San Jose.

This was all pretty big. Laughter.

Mr. Zimpher: I was 17 I think.

Wow!

Mr. Zimpher: Wouldn't do that today though. That's a lot of good memories and we have breakfast the first Saturday of each month Alumni of Analy High School.

Really, how nice!

Mr. Zimpher: We meet at the Green House Cafe in Sebastopol for breakfast. We usually 16 or 18 guys there.

Wow, that's really keeping in touch. Once a month.

Mr. Zimpher: Yes.

That' s incredible. You must really have stories to trade then?

Mr. Zimpher: Yes. We do a lot of talkin besides eatin breakfast.

I'll bet. Did you have a favorite teacher or somebody that inspired you?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, I remember my teacher at Sebastopol Elementary School. Ed Punce was, taught Physical Education and Arithmetic. He was a non-nonsense kind of guy. He kept everybody in line. But everybody liked him. He was a great teacher and good coach. Then at Analy, Elmer Carlson was our coach there and he also was a real great guy. He did a good job with the kids and everybody liked him. Carlson Field is named after him.

Oh.

Mr. Zimpher: He was ground official later on. He passed on. Let's see my first job was I worked at Spease Vinegar Works in Sebastopol.

Where was that? Oh for heaven sakes.

Mr. Zimpher: That's where the theater is now. That was Spease. They made brandy, I think, earlier.

Right.

Mr. Zimpher: When I was there they were making vinegar.

From apples?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, they used the peelings and cores. Apples got sorted out to make the vinegar. Ground them up and pressed the juice. Fermented it and made vinegar. Now when I was in high school.

That was right next to the school?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, it wasn't far from the school. During the summer I got a job. I was interested in seeing the theater develop then, and they were building. Guy really did a nice job the building the theater.

Yes, Yes. I'm so happy to have a theater for the kids to be able to go to again instead of having to into Santa Rosa. It's too bad when the other one was taken down. Is that the theater that you remember? The one where the Safeway is? Or was another one before that?

Mr. Zimpher: Well, yea there were. When I first moved to Sebastopol, there was two theaters in town. There was the Star Theater which was up, where it used to be Carlson's Bike shop is now. There's a theater in there. I remember our neighbor in back when we lived on Colvert Lane, was Mr. Huntley and he owned the theater. My dad and I out in the field one day and he introduced himself and gave us a couple passes to the theater. That was great! And also the El Rey Theater. I used to go to matinees when I was a kid. The El Rey Theater which was down south around where the furniture store is now. And then later on they built the one up by North Main, the Analy Theater. Which was torn down when they built Safeway up there.

Then we didn't have any theaters?

Mr. Zimpher: No, we didn't.

From two to nothing.

Mr. Zimpher: For about three years. Yea.

Are you living still in Sebastopol?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, I live off Scheaffer Road, south of Sebastopol. Built a house there in 1981. We've been there since then.

Do you have family in?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea, I have a son and a daughter. They both live in Sebastopol.

So everyone sticks close to home. Nice.

Mr. Zimpher: Yea. Son lives on Mill Station Road and my daughter on Colvert Lane.

In the family home?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea.

How nice. That must be big memory ties when you go back there to visit her?

Mr. Zimpher: Yea. Actually my dad left me the house. I rent the house to her, my daughter. She just moved in about 3 months ago there.

Nice that family can be so close.

Mr. Zimpher: Yea.

Good feeling.

Mr. Zimpher: So, that's a lot of memories in Sebastopol. A lot of changes. A lot more traffic!

That's for sure.

Mr. Zimpher: I can remember when we only had South Main and the main intersection we had a stop sign on both sides. No signal light.

Was there a flashing?

Mr. Zimpher: No, Just a stop an arterial stop sign. Yea you had to stop on Bodega Avenue when you came to Main Street. They were comin each way, but, that was all there was, two stop signs. Not much traffic.

Yes, they're putting up a much more signs up. Station was the last and Graton Road ,and 116. Can you think of anything else that?

Mr. Zimpher: Well, that's about all. I first married in 1950 and bought the 3 acres on Gravenstein Highway North of the fruit stand was. Raised my family there. That was not long after I got out of the Army Air. Core Started building houses in 1960. Retired in 1989. Been doing some traveling.

Well good.

Mr. Zimpher: Sebastopol is a good place to live. It's good to travel and visit, but it's always nice to get home.

Nice to come home and you realize how beautiful it is.

Mr. Zimpher: That's right. How nice the weather is. Let's see I separated from my first wife in 1960. 1970. Met my present wife in 71, we were married in 73. Went to the Wheyland and Cheffer Road and built a house there in 81. I still have a lot of friends in Sebastopol.

I'll bet you do. I really like the idea that you keep these monthly meetings from high school.

Mr. Zimpher: Yea. Several friends that I see regularly that I went to school with.